

# **Garbage Gazette**

**Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection**

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## **Connecticut's New License to Recycle**

*Connecticut Saves Money and the Environment by Establishing a Contract for Recycled Aluminum License Plates*

A recent State of Connecticut contract for recycled content license plates illustrates how environmentally preferable purchasing can save money and help protect the environment. In November 1999, Connecticut's Department of Administrative Services and the Department of Corrections completed a contract for blank aluminum license plates. After years of using virgin aluminum stock, the contract specified recycled stock containing 90 to 95 percent recycled content. This environmentally conscious choice helps conserve natural resources, reduce environmental impacts and saves tens of thousands of dollars.



A change in the license plate production process was the key factor leading to the decision to use recycled content aluminum. Previously, the Department of Corrections avoided recycled aluminum plates because impurities carried by the recycled alloy were thought to impede the adhesion of paint. A recent shift to "reflectorized sheeted" license plates circumvented this problem by substituting paint for a thin sheet of reflective material. Unlike paint, the reflectorized sheets adhere to either recycled aluminum or virgin aluminum with equal success.

Realizing that the reflectorized sheet process opened the door for the use of recycled content aluminum, state purchasers worked with the supplier, JR Wald Co., to choose a grade of aluminum that contains between 90 and 95 percent recycled content.

The change to recycled content aluminum provides a number of striking economic and environmental benefits. Recycled aluminum costs a few cents less per pound than virgin aluminum. By securing the right to purchase up to 2.2 million pounds of recycled content aluminum, the contract could result in cost savings of approximately 50 thousand dollars. Savings can also be reaped by selling returned license plates to aluminum recyclers at approximately 40 cents per pound.



The new contract also reduces the generation of pollution and conserves energy use. Recycled aluminum results in 95 percent less air pollution and 97 percent less water pollution than producing aluminum from natural resources. The switch to recycled aluminum license plates avoids the need to treat and dispose of 3.6 million pounds of red mud (a caustic soup of metallic oxides and other contaminants that is a by-product of the production of aluminum from bauxite) and 90 thousand pounds of solid waste. The new contract also avoids the generation of 3.2 million pounds of carbon dioxide.

Recycled aluminum also saves 95 percent of the energy that would be required to mine bauxite ore and extract alumina, the raw material needed to manufacture aluminum. Described in more concrete terms, the new contract saves the equivalent energy of 2.6 million gallons of gasoline or enough electricity to serve 1,100 typical homes for ten years.

The popularity of recycled content aluminum began in the early 1980's when states started to convert license plates production from steel to aluminum. Driven by cost savings and encouraged by environmental benefits, the majority of states use recycled

aluminum. In the Northeast, such states as Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania and now Connecticut use recycled aluminum license plates.

When asked about her work on the recycled aluminum contract, Carol Wilson, Contract Team Leader for the Department of Administrative Services, said that “recycled content aluminum was the best choice from a cost, performance and environmental perspective.” Simple statements such as these speak to the growing understanding that economic and environmental goals can be achieved by making environmentally informed purchasing decisions. Guided by the practice of environmentally preferable purchasing, Connecticut will continue to search for purchasing opportunities that satisfy environmental aspirations as well as saving the public’s tax dollars.



### Recycle Your License Plates!



Connecticut will be phasing out the traditional royal blue plates that our state has had for 42 years. They will be replaced with highly reflective markers with a bluish-white background, similar to that of the Long Island Sound plates and other specialty markers. Although the Department of Motor Vehicles will accept plates returned by individuals who drop them off at DMV offices, because of staffing and storage considerations, they are neither requiring nor soliciting their return. However the plates are made of .0032 gauge aluminum and therefore have value as scrap metal. Plates should be brought to the town transfer station for inclusion in the scrap metal pile, put out at annual or biannual town-sponsored scrap metal collection or brought to a private scrap metal dealer. Make certain to deface the plate so that it is no longer usable. Contact your town hall to find out the appropriate option for your area.

### Connecticut Recycles Day 2000 Planning Begins

Connecticut has begun to plan activities and events for the 4<sup>th</sup> annual celebration of America Recycles Day. Volunteers are needed to serve on the Steering Committee, help with publicity efforts, raise funds for prizes and plan exciting events. If you would like to participate, or your company would like to be an event sponsor, please contact Meg Enkler at (860) 424-3238 for more information.

### Upcoming Meetings

**R2K – Recycling for Tomorrow, 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Northeast Resource Recovery Conference and Exposition** will be held on June 12<sup>th</sup>- June 14<sup>th</sup> at the Radison Hotel on the waterfront in Burlington, Vermont. For more information contact NRRA, P.O. Box 721, Concord, NH 03302-0721, Phone: (603) 224-6996, Fax: (603) 226-4466 or e-mail: [nrra@conknet.com](mailto:nrra@conknet.com)

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